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CIA/RR CB-61-15

15 March 1961

3637

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED
1999

CURRENT SUPPORT BRIEF

A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SOVIET SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SOVIET SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

A major reorganization of the Soviet school system was begun in the 1959/60 school year and is scheduled for completion between 1963 and 1965. In addition to adding "labor training" to the curricula of all Soviet schools, the law on education passed in December 1958 provided for (1) extension of compulsory education from 7 to 8 years, (2) conversion of the general academic high schools into labor-polytechnical high schools, and (3) expansion of evening and correspondence schools at the high school and college levels. These goals were elaborated further in the Seven Year Plan (1959-65) and supplemented by decrees providing for an expansion in the network of child-care facilities--nurseries, kindergartens and boarding schools.

In the past two years the USSR has proceeded vigorously in expanding the network of child-care facilities and also in increasing the enrollment in evening schools and correspondence courses. On the other hand, the extension of compulsory 8-year education is apparently behind schedule, and high school enrollment has continued to decline more rapidly than the population of high-school age. This uneven progress in carrying out educational goals evidently was dictated in large part by the need for additional workers during years when the number of persons reaching working age was still declining sharply. Thus, those programs that would increase labor force participation among teenagers and mothers have been stressed, and programs that would put teenagers in school instead of in jobs have been permitted to lag. In the next several years, as the number of persons reaching working age rises sharply, these lagging programs probably will receive new emphasis. The need to expand school facilities also will become critical because of the expected rapid rise in the school age population.

Educational Plans and Progress

Child-care facilities--According to the Seven Year Plan, the network of nurseries and kindergartens is to be expanded to accommodate more than 6 million children in 1965 compared to about 3.5 million in 1958. Since the population of pre-school age (less than 7 years) probably will not increase much during that period, this program will provide facilities for at least 18 percent of the children in these ages compared to about 10 percent in 1958. By the end of 1959, facilities had expanded to accommodate an additional 400,000 children 1/, about the average annual increase required to meet the planned goal. In 1960 more kindergartens and nurseries were built than in 1959. 2/ Seeking to use available facilities more effectively, a 1959 decree provided for the merging of nurseries and kindergartens into unified institutions. 3/

The Seven Year Plan also called for an expansion of enrollment in boarding schools from 180,000 in 1958 to 2,500,000 in 1965. These schools were first established in their present form in 1956, and have been widely acclaimed by the Soviet leadership as the ultimate and ideal institution in which to prepare the "New Soviet Man." During

the current school year, however, only 540,000 students are attending these schools. 4/ In an attempt to overcome the lag in this program, the 1960 decree transferring budgeted funds from housing construction to school construction singled out the boarding schools for special consideration. 5/

Compulsory Eight-Year Schooling--The transition from seven-year to eight-year compulsory schooling is scheduled for completion by the fall of 1962. 6/ It is unlikely that this schedule will be met, since the problems of high dropout rates and inadequate school facilities--problems that have kept about one-fifth of all Soviet children from completing the seventh grade nine years after it became compulsory--have apparently yet to be solved. During the past two years, enrollment in the first seven grades has barely kept pace with population growth in these ages. In extending compulsory schooling an additional year, the USSR is faced with the large problem of finding the physical facilities to add an extra grade to the existing schools in the face of a rapid increase in the number of children eligible for these schools. The population age 7 through 14 currently is increasing by about two million annually, after declining during most of the 1950s because of the low birth rates of World War II. (See Table page 4)

Labor-Polytechnical High Schools--The conversion of the general high schools (grades 8-10) into labor-polytechnical high schools (grades 9-11) was scheduled to begin in the 1959/60 school year and to be completed in 3 to 5 years. At the beginning of the current school year, 15,000 high schools--about half of the total--provided production training for their students. 7/ High school (day) enrollment has continued to decline rapidly, however, and now constitutes only one-fourth of the population 15 through 17 compared to one-third in 1958 and almost one-half in 1955. The conversion process thus has been eased considerably by the relatively small student body currently attending the high schools. Soviet plans call for a reversal of the current downward trend in the proportion of high-school age youth enrolled in full-time high schools.

Work-Study Programs in High Schools, Tekhnikums, and VUZes--As planned, enrollment in evening schools and correspondence courses at high schools, tekhnikums, and VUZes has increased rapidly--from 3.7 million in 1958 to 5.0 million in 1960. Most of this increase has occurred in the high schools. The USSR plans to increase enrollment in evening and correspondence courses to almost 9 million by 1965.

Table

School-Age Population and Population Reaching
Working Age (15) in the USSR
1958-65

	Million Persons		
	<u>School-Age Population</u>		<u>Population Reaching</u> <u>Age 15</u>
	<u>7 - 14</u>	<u>15 - 17</u>	
1958	26.4	10.3	3.2
1959	28.1	9.4	2.7
1960	30.2	8.3	2.3
1961	32.4	7.4	2.3
1962	34.3	7.4	2.8
1963	35.6	8.6	3.5
1964	36.4	10.3	4.0
1965	37.1	11.7	4.2

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Analyst:

Coord:

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